

# ADRIAN ALAN

*Fine Art & Antiques*



**François Linke**

## **A Rare Louis XVI Style Gilt-Bronze and Glass Mantel Clock**

Circa: French, Circa 1900

A Very Rare Louis XVI Style Gilt-Bronze and Glass Mantel Clock 'Pendule A Cage', By Francois Linke, With a White Marble Base.

Linke Index no. 076'.

Linke Title: 'pendule a cage'.

Signed to the dial 'F. Linke a Paris'.

Stamped to the bronze case 'F. Linke'.

This rare example of a clock by François Linke has twin going barrels, with a Brocot-type anchor escapement and rack strike on a bell.

The circular convex white enamel dial signed 'F. Linke/Paris' with pierced and engraved gilt-bronze hands. The hours indicated in Roman Numerals, the Seconds in Arabic numerals.

The clock case is surmounted by a pierced urn flanked by griffins suspending a berried swag, the arched rectangular case with glazed panels on four sides, the front hung with tasselled drapery flanked by scrolling acanthus-sheathed and grapevine-entwined uprights ending in hoof-feet, above a winged sphinx suspending garlands, on a white marble breakfront-shaped Vitruvian scrolled plinth, put down on foliate-cast feet.

Linke purchased the original master bronze for this important clock from the 3rd auction of the fonds de commerce of the bronzier Dernière, held in October 1903. Designed to have either porcelain or glazed front and sides, Christopher Payne in his seminal book on Linke, notes that it is a very rare model. Linke paid 440 francs at the sale for the master bronze and the finished clocks were offered for sale at 2,850 and 1,950 francs, depending on size. The present model being the largest.

An example of this clock is illustrated by Christopher Payne as plate 187 in his book 'François Linke, (1855 - 1946), The Belle Époque of French Furniture'.

French, Circa 1900.

#### **Literature:**

Payne, Christopher, François Linke, (1855 - 1946), The Belle Époque of French Furniture, Antique Collectors' Club, (Woodbridge, UK), 2003; pl. 187, p. 172-3, Appendix 1 - p.342.

#### **Artist description:**

François Linke (1855 - 1946) was the most important Parisian cabinet maker of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and possibly the most sought after cabinet maker of his period.

He was born in 1855 in the small village of Pankraz, in what is now the Czech Republic. Records show that Linke served an apprenticeship with the master cabinetmaker Neumann, then in 1875 at the age of 20 he arrived in Paris where he lived until he died in 1946.

It is known that the fledgling Linke workshops were active in Paris in the Faubourg St. Antoine as early as 1881, and during this time he supplied furniture for other more established makers such as Jansen and Krieger.

The quality of Linke's craftsmanship was unsurpassed by any of his contemporaries and reached its peak with his spectacular stand at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900, where his Grand Bureau took the gold medal. He gambled his fortune and reputation on this stand, exhibiting several breathtaking items of furniture with sculptural mounts of the most exceptional quality and proportion. His gamble worked and his reputation was established to such an extent that Linke continued to be the pre-eminent furniture house in Paris until the Second World War.

As the Art Journal reported in 1900 on Linke's stand:

The work of M. Linke ... was an example of what can be done by seeking inspiration amongst the classic examples of Louis XV and XVI without in any great sense copying these great works. M. Linke's work was original in the true sense of the word, and as such commended itself to the intelligent seeker after the really artistic things of the Exhibition. Wonderful talent was employed in producing the magnificent pieces of furniture displayed....

The formation of Linke's distinctive style was made possible by his collaboration with the sculptor Léon Messagé.

Together Linke and Messagé designed furniture for Linke's 1900 exhibition stand, with exuberant allegorical figures cast in high relief, that exemplified Linke's ability to seamlessly merge the different mediums of wood carving, bronze and marquetry into a dynamic unified whole.

Today Linke is best known for the exceptionally high quality of his work, as well as his individualism and inventiveness. All of his work has the finest, most lavish mounts, very often applied to comparatively simple carcasses of quarter veneered kingwood or tulipwood. The technical brilliance of his work and the artistic change that it represented were never to be repeated.